

## TANTALON'S SECRET REVEALED!

The original *Tasks of Tantalos*, published in 1985 by Oxford University Press, is a fantasy novel-cum-puzzle book in which the reader is an adventuring hero in the sinister land of Gallantaria. After a devastating war which claimed the lives of Gallantaria's King and Queen, the country is being ruled by Tantalos, Grand Wizard of the Court. There is no heir to the throne and, as old age begins to take the sorcerer, a successor must be found. Tantalos decrees that his successor will be found through a challenging series of twelve Tasks.

The book itself offers no clues to help task-solvers. The solution to each Task is a number. If the numbers are added together, readers must then embark on a 'Runesearch' which will check if their total is correct, but this involves discovering the ultimate secret of the book; a clever technique which has never been used before in publishing.

In response to the many readers who have written in asking for hints, Steve Jackson has prepared this booklet to take them through the Tasks in two stages. The majority of the booklet is a series of hints to enable readers to solve the Tasks for themselves. But on the last page, all solutions are given in full. With this booklet, would-be successors to the Gallantarian throne can check their answers and find out where they went wrong.

*The Tasks of Tantalos*

Hardback Edition published 1985 by Oxford University Press

Softback Edition published 1986 by Penguin Books

*Tantalos's Secret*

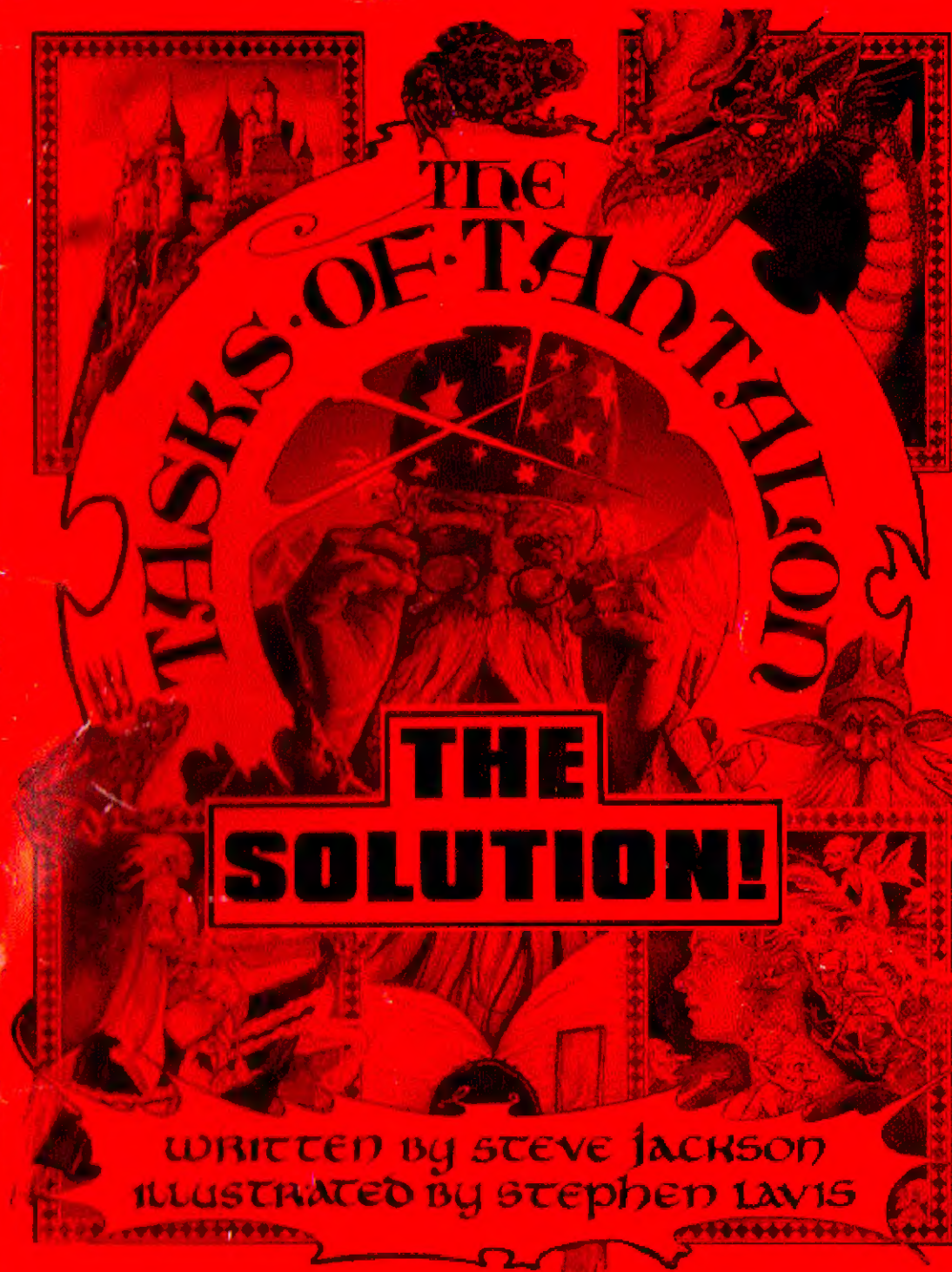
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## TANTALON'S SECRET

### Please read this first:

This booklet is arranged in two parts. The bulk of the text is a sort of 'Hints Sheet' which attempts to answer most of the questions that readers may have had about the puzzles in *Tasks of Tantalos* if there had only been someone to ask. In this way readers can refer to specific Tasks and attempt to solve them without having all the answers revealed.

But for those who have well and truly "spent as much time on this infuriating book as they are ever going to," the complete solutions are listed on the last page.

I suggest that readers staple or sellotape the last page of the book to the inside back cover in order to avoid accidentally glancing at the answers. Only if you are well and truly stuck should you then break the seal and look at all the answers.

(c) 1987 Steve Jackson

*Published by Workshop Productions*

## THE TASKS OF TANTALON

*The Tasks of Tantalos* began in early 1983 when David Fickling, an editor from Oxford University Press, approached Ian Livingstone and myself about the possibility of writing a couple of *Fighting Fantasy*-style books for younger children with limited choices and no dice but using full-colour illustrations to make the books attractive. This did not interest me at all as I had no wish to write for 'younger children'. But the idea of using full-colour illustrations did have its appeal if they could be used not so much as packaging to make the book look attractive, but instead as essential features.

The idea of puzzles came up and I considered the Labours of Hercules in Greek mythology. Hercules was set 12 Labours by King Eurystheus. These involved slaying monsters, cleaning out filthy stables, fetching the Girdle of Hippolyte and so on. But this story



had already been told. The idea of a similar story within the world of Fighting Fantasy had possibilities and I set to work on planning out the puzzles.

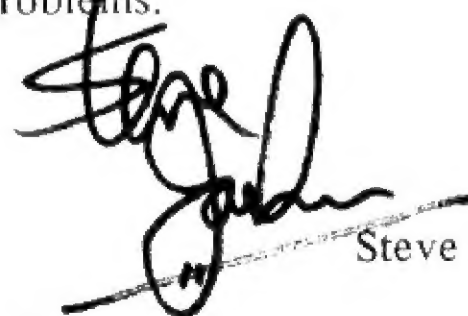
On a memorable train journey from Edinburgh to London in June that same year, I came up with ten of the twelve Tasks. Some were variations on a well-known theme (eg. the Ting Ring), some were adaptations of obscure puzzles that had impressed me in the past (eg. the Princes of the Ham) and others were entirely new (eg. the River Eede and the Demon Fish).

With these ten puzzles, David and I set to work on finding an illustrator. Everyone I knew was either booked up or could not afford to commit themselves to what was to turn out to be a 2-year project. David eventually introduced me to Stephen Lavis who was excited about the idea and we spent several pub lunches in enthused discussion about the nature of the book, which had now become known as *The Tasks of Tantalus* (later this was changed to *Tasks of Tantalus* when we discovered a character from Greek Mythology called Tantalus).

In the end, Stephen contributed significantly to the design of some of the puzzles. When the hardback was published in September 1985, we were all proud of the result. The illustrations made the book a work of art. The Tasks, though not easy, worked well, and the final secret - the mechanism by which readers could test whether they had solved the book correctly - was perfect.

But since publication in 1985, I have had hundreds of letters from frustrated readers wanting hints or wanting to know the solution. Personally I feel it is a bit unfair to leave readers hanging on, not knowing whether they are along the right lines or not. But no publisher would publish such a book of solutions as it is not really an economic proposition. So I took the job on myself.

I hope it helps solve your problems.



Steve Jackson

Further copies of this booklet can be obtained by sending £1 plus a large stamped, addressed envelope (overseas orders £2) to:

Workshop Productions  
c/o Games Workshop, 1 Dalling Rd, London W6 0JD

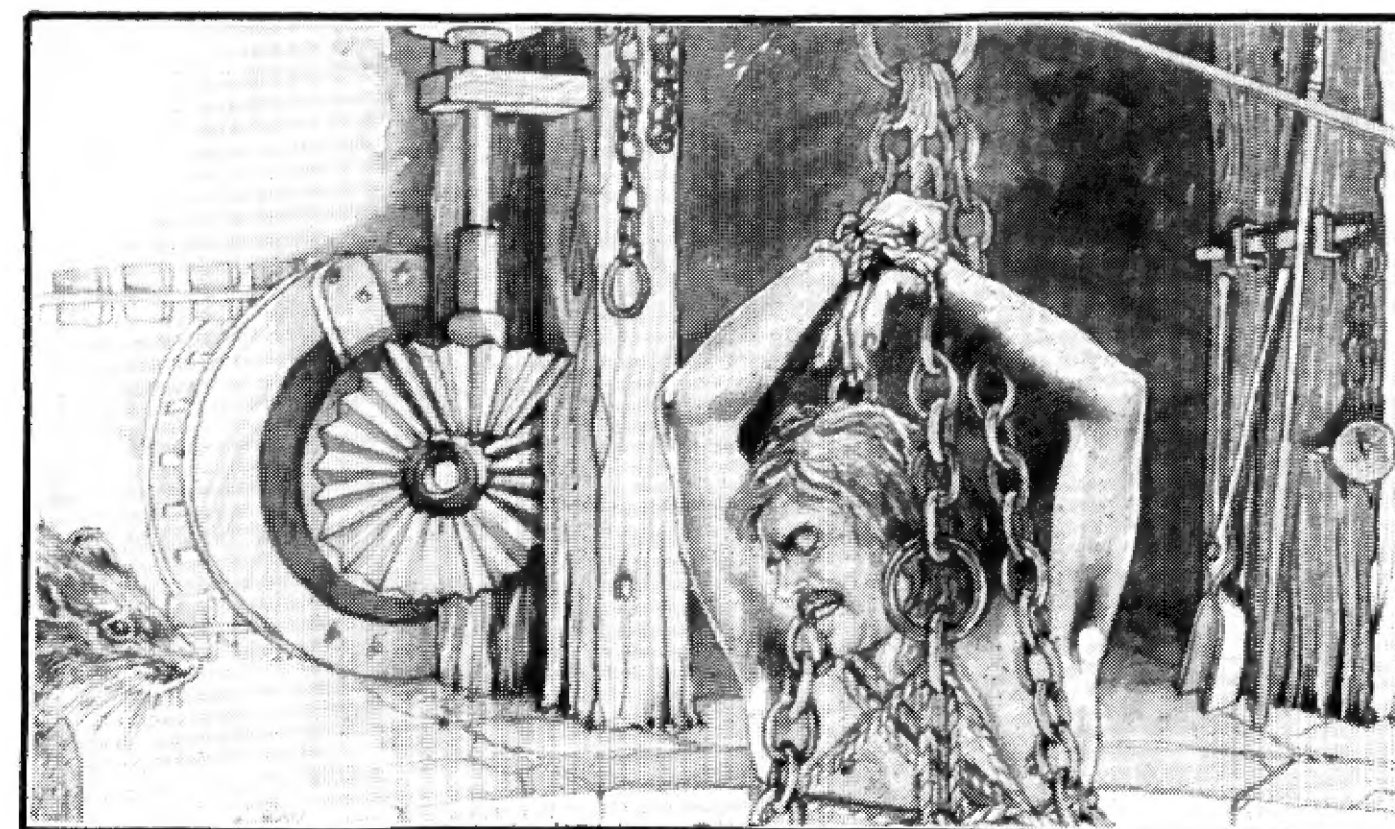
## 1. "Release Sir Dunstable..."

Stephen Lavis did a tremendous job with this one (this and the River Eede are my favourite illustrations in the book). If you could see my original rough sketch for the cogs and pulley system, you'd see just how well he did!

There is no magical secret here. It's a straightforward question of following the cogs, ropes, pulleys and belts to see how they shift when the lever is moved. For example, if you move the lever to position '5', this pulls the rope attached to the bottom of the lever. Following this round the pulleys you can see that it will cause the wheel (to the left of the lever) to turn anticlockwise. This will result in the rope

which stretches over the lever being pulled to the left, turning the small wheel anticlockwise. The small wheel is attached by a belt to a larger wheel which will also turn anticlockwise. At the other end of the axle is a toothed wheel and, as this turns anticlockwise, the larger wheel above it turns clockwise, drawing the belt around it and so on.

The 90 degree cogs are a little more difficult to follow but eventually you will reach the coil of rope which suspends Sir Dunstable over the flaming pit. It is at this point that you realise you have forgotten which way you moved the lever to start with...





## 2. "The Demon Fish..."

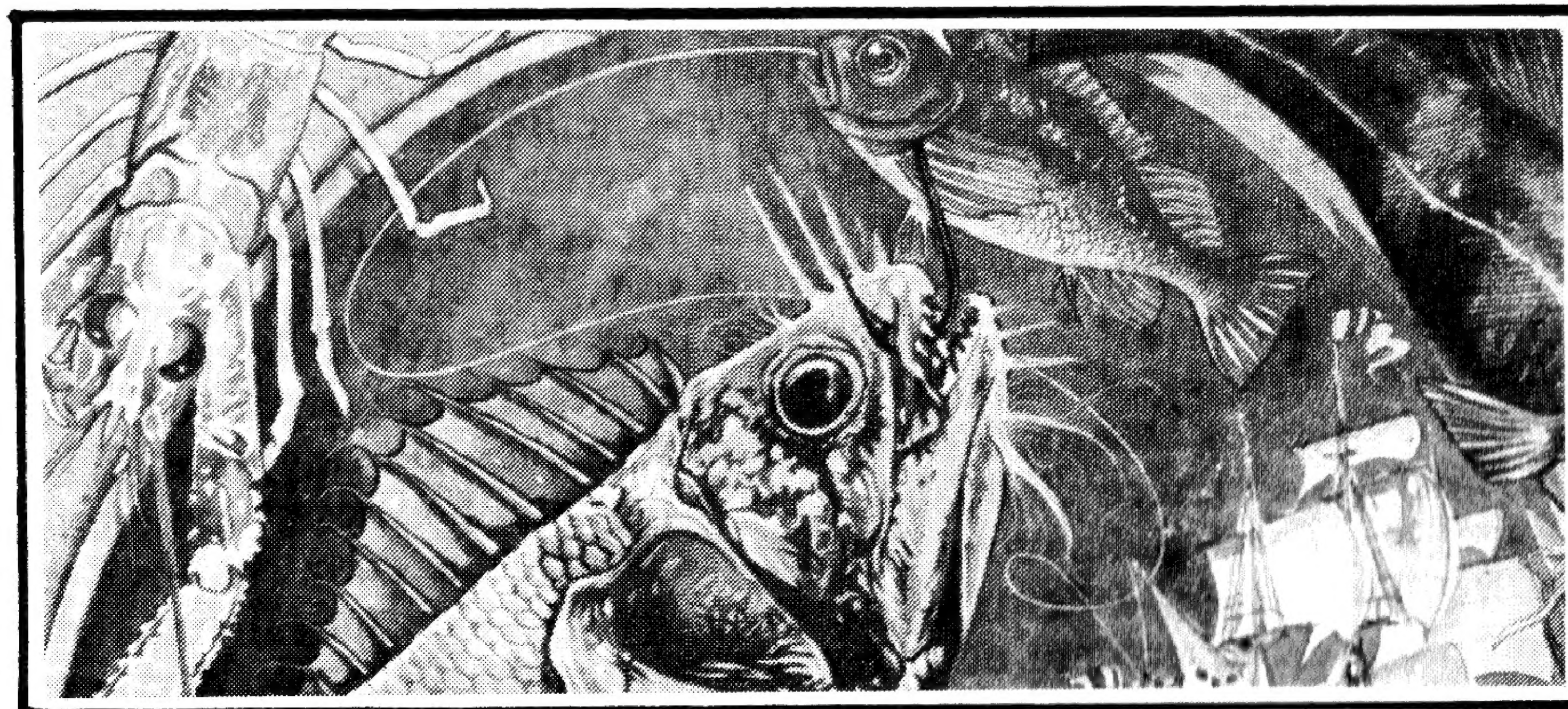
I must admit that this puzzle was something of a disappointment when I saw the art. My original conception was along the lines of a cross-section through the sea with a fishing boat floating on the surface and dozens of fish and other sea-creatures swimming round in the water eating each other. Stephen's artistic interpretation is interesting and his technique is excellent, but he ended up leaving out about 75% of the food chain I had designed, leaving the puzzle too easy to solve. (What? You disagree?)

The illustration shows a series of food chains, with various creatures eating each other. The Crab in the bottom right-hand corner eats the Zebra Fish which in turn eats the little grey striped fish and so on. The Demon Fish (shown

eating an oversized Goldfish in the centre of the picture) can thus be caught by first catching an oversized Goldfish. But you are not offered 'an oversized Goldfish' as bait, merely Flies, Meat, Worms and Minnows. Thus you have to use your bait to catch a fish which can then be used to catch a fish further up the food chain which will lead to the oversized Goldfish and eventually snare the Demon Fish.

Pretty straightforward, really. Especially if you follow the food chain backwards. There is a small twist at the end which explains the reason for the... XXX. No I'd better not give too much away. I'll give you a cryptic crossword clue instead:

XXX = "Underground plant stem or colonial insect (9)"



## 3. "The Hag-Witch of Wiertown..."

This one's a bit sneaky really. I daresay you've all tried counting the Hag-Witches and then got stuck wondering whether the four Hag-Witches round the border and the one looking over the parchment should be included.

The answer is yes. They should be included. The only other things to watch out for are Hag-Witches with teeth missing, balding heads, etc. (these don't count). Also the Hag-Witch's ring is significant. Look at the Crow in the bottom-right. Since this puzzle

is a little confusing, I will give the answer. Subtract the lowest number to be found on the Runes on the Sir Dunstable page from the next lowest.

Incidentally, Stephen Lavis drew himself in the Weirtown market. He is standing by the game stall, wearing a blue tunic and clutching a red sword. He also drew yours truly on the frontispiece (Oxford University Press Hardback edition only). Tantalos is looking down at me over "The Land of Gallantaria" title.



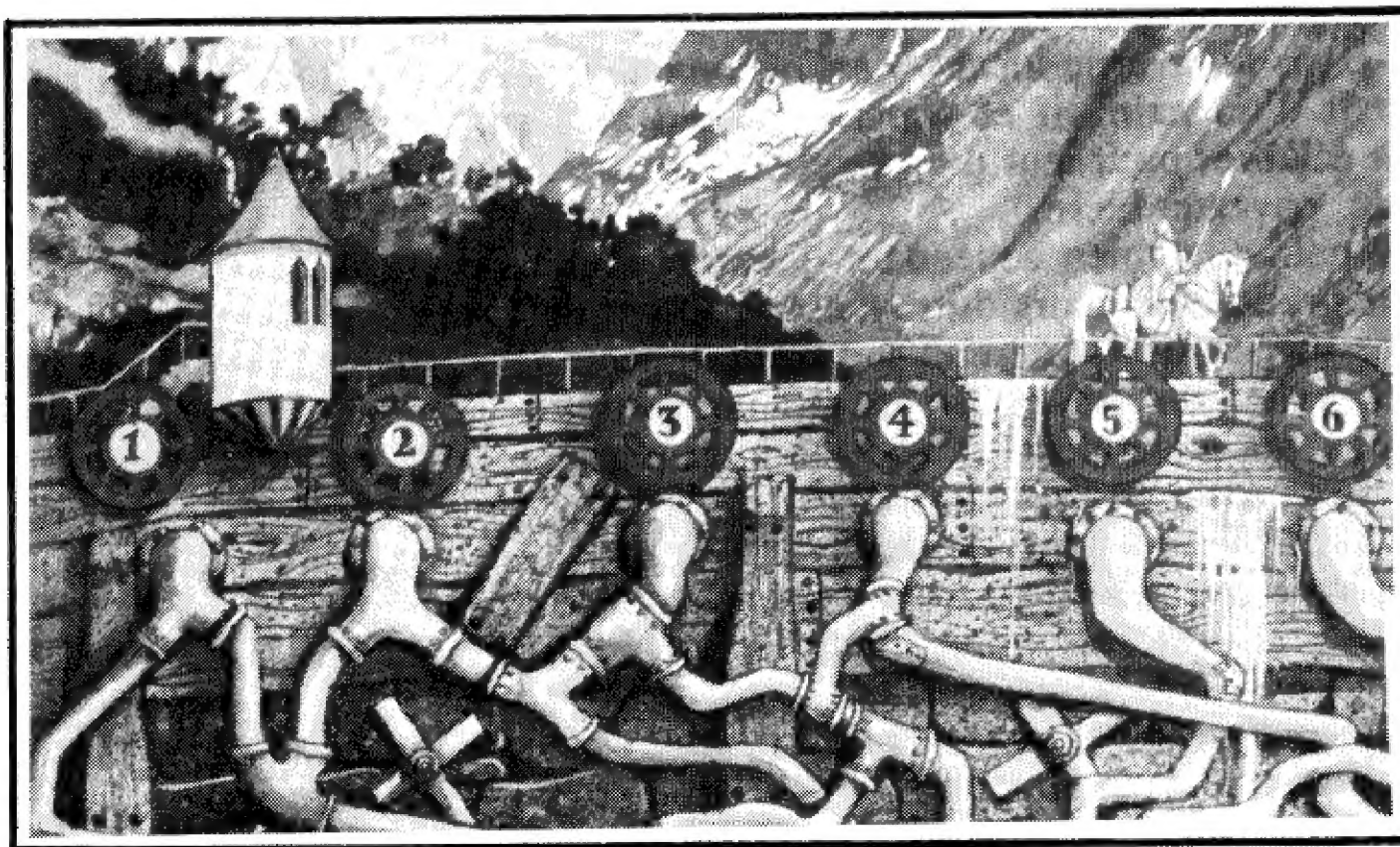


#### 4. "The River Eede..."

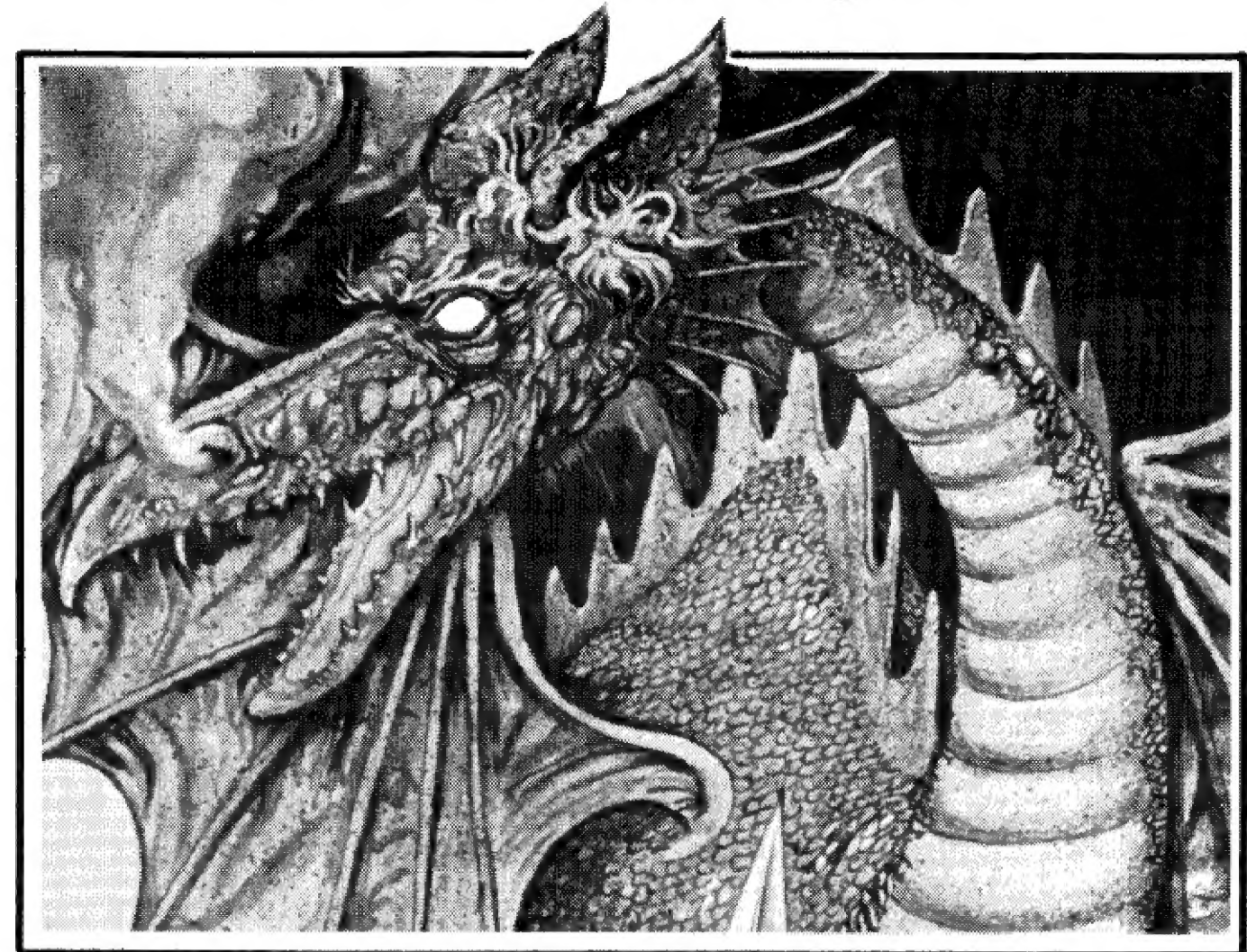
A marvellous piece of construction, eh? The puzzle itself is not really all that difficult and from the letters I've seen, most of you got this one. All it takes is for you to study the connections. There are *three* valves open. Each open valve will let water flow down through its pipe. If the pipe reaches a join, the water will continue to flow downwards but the stream will be split. One of the nice features of this picture is the 'boiler, tap and gutter'-type construction in the middle of the tangled mess of pipes. At the last minute, I realised that this actually gave the game away (ie. water was definitely coming down this pipe) and Stephen had to hur-

riedly paint in a connection between pipes four and three (you can see it's a slightly different colour) to confuse the issue.

The easiest way to approach this is to pick the two 'dry' outlets and follow them back. If, for example, you follow the third outlet back, you can see that valve five must definitely be closed as no water flows through it. If you can eliminate some valves in this way, sorting out the junctions becomes much easier. Questions of the type: "Let's see... That means that either valve X and/or valve Y must be open." become: "Ah, but I know valve Y is dry, therefore valve X must be open."



#### 5. "The Brimstone Dragon..."



A real frustration, this one. I must admit I counted the gold pieces five times when I first saw the illustration and of those five attempts, I only came up with the correct solution twice!

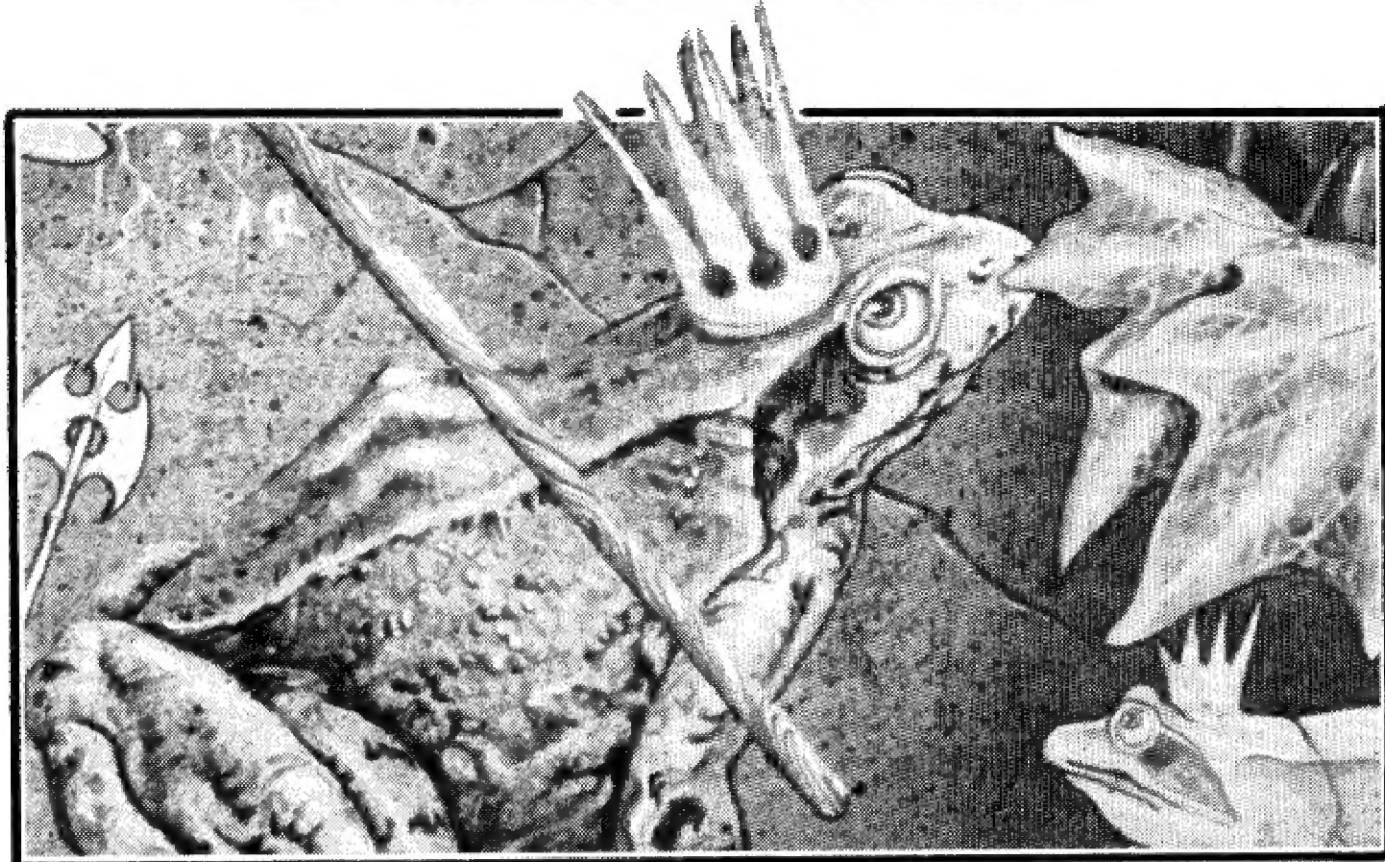
There's nothing I can really explain about this. You simply have to count all the gold pieces you can see including those ones you can only just see a hint of. Rather than have you try once more, I'll come straight out with the answer: 102.

Stephen and I did have something of an argument

about this illo. In my opinion the Dragon looked much too cartoon-like as if it were saying: "Aha! What have we here then, chaps?" My solution was to white out the Dragon's eye, which I did on a photocopy with some typewriter correction fluid. The result was a much more menacing, Fighting Fantasy-style Dragon. But in the end Stephen either forgot or refused to do it! Anyway, it doesn't affect the puzzle which I'm sure caused lots of near misses in readers' final solutions.



## 6. "The Princes of the Ham..."



I think this one turned out more difficult than it ever should have been, simply because readers couldn't quite get the hang of what they were supposed to do!

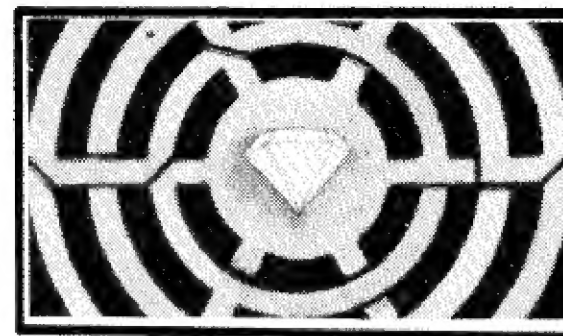
The inspiration for this one came from an old pub puzzle. You line up eight coins along a line. Four 'Heads' are placed to the left and four 'Tails' are placed to the right, with a single space between them. The object is to move the Heads to the right and the Tails to the left to end up with a mirror image of the starting set-up. Each coin can only move in one direction ie. the Heads may only be moved to the right and the Tails to the left; they may never reverse directions. A coin can move

only either:

- Into a vacant space directly in front of it, or
- By *jumping over a single opponent* into the vacant space beyond.

Just below the main illustration you will see a plan of the starting set-up. The Frog-Princes are to the left and the Horntoads are to the right, with a space in the middle. Try the puzzle on this plan with coins as described above and see if you can work out the solution for yourself. As a hint, the solution is greater than 10 moves and less than 20. In fact you will find that there is only one way of solving it. Remember, the frogs and toads can never leap backwards.

## 7. "The Regent's Jewel..."



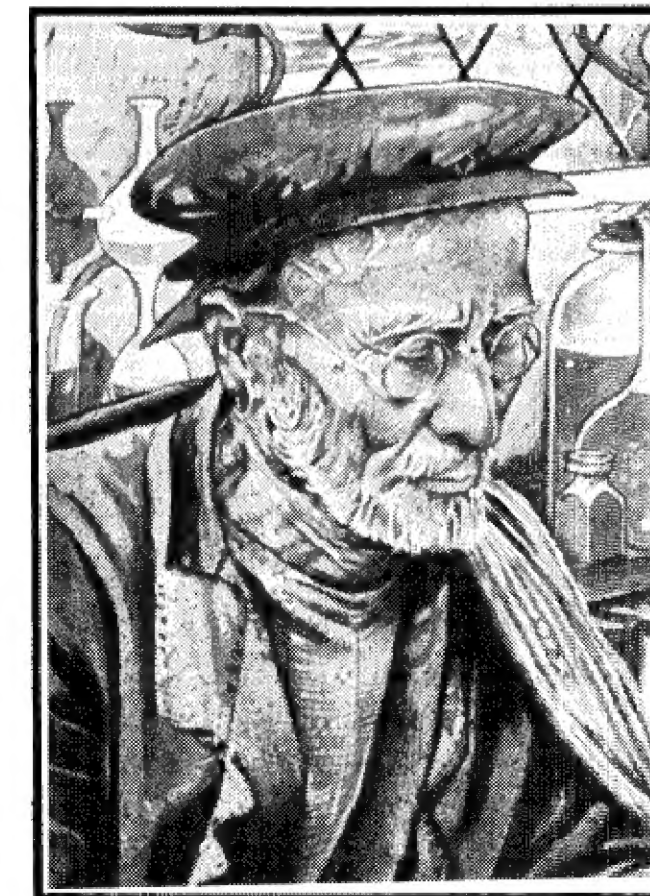
The solution to this one is in two parts. First of all you must try each of the four maze entrances to see which lead to the centre, where the Regent's Jewel is kept. You will find that more than one of the entrances lead to the centre.

"But only one path is unguarded." warns Fagorn. "The others are all lain with deadly traps... The Orb of Shantos, fashioned in crystal, knows the secret of the minotaur's passages. Its advice will lead you safely to the creature." An example of the Orb of Shantos is given at the foot of the page - but it isn't the right one. There is no entrance with four stars. You will have to find a similar Orb, and these are scattered through the book.

## 8. "Seek out the Ting Ring..."

This was the first illustration Stephen did for the book. Superb detail, isn't it? But to this day I still don't know why he put those little Goblin creatures in the top right. Anyway, a great picture, and quite a difficult puzzle. When I first saw it (I had simply asked Stephen to 'hide the ring somewhere in the picture'), it took me a good ten minutes to find the Ting Ring.

I perhaps ought to explain that there is something of a 'trick question' here. If you need a further hint, it is in the bottom half of the picture.





## 9. "King Tag of Casper..."

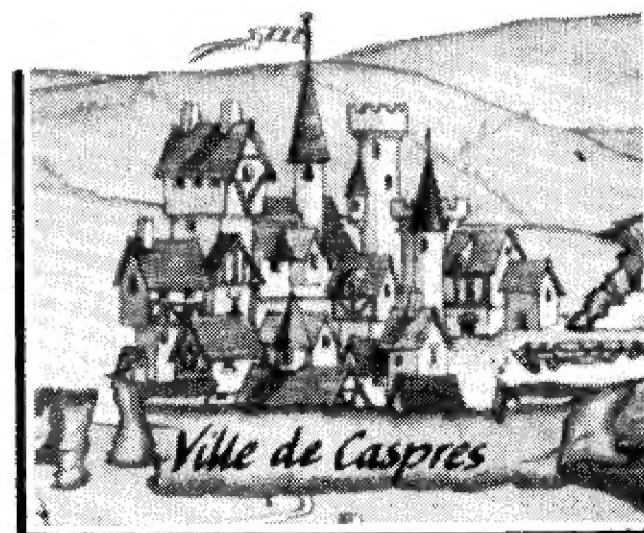
This is, I think, the most difficult of the puzzles, though you'll kick yourself when you discover the answer. It's the sort of thing that you may struggle for hours over - days even - or you may get it within a minute!

I'll start with two important clues. First, this is a problem in lateral thinking; it is not like the other puzzles in the book. Secondly, the illustration is almost unnecessary. Not totally unnecessary, but it misleads more than it helps. The main parts of this puzzle can be solved just by reading the text. There are many confusing anagrams on the map. Are the 'Catgrapes Vineyard' and 'Carp's Gate' clues? Tag is in exile, living underground - is he then in the Disused Mines? Lady Davina is described earlier in the book as being 'ailing'. Have they gone to the Healing Well? The answer to all these questions is NO!

Let's go through the text: "On fleeing from Casper, King Tag met the Lady Davina, his *Queen* at a secret rendezvous point due north in the shadow of Mount Cuspid. Together they rode southwards through the night to Eacham Abbey to meet their friend and spiritual guide, the *Bishop* of Eacham. A faithful ally, the

Bishop escorted them three days later to Greycloud Manor, home of Sir Niebling, *Knight* of Eacham. But even their friend was forced to turn them out when, two nights later, a band of loyalist vigilantes were scouted to the north."

That should give you a big enough hint. Then you must draw imaginary lines down the map and across it to join up the numbers round the border. Tag's final hiding place will then fall neatly into one of the squares thus formed. You then read off the co-ordinates and add them together. If, for example, you concluded that it must be 'The Town of Casper' the co-ordinates would be 4 (North-South) and 5 (East-West). Added together, this makes 9. Which is *not* the correct solution!



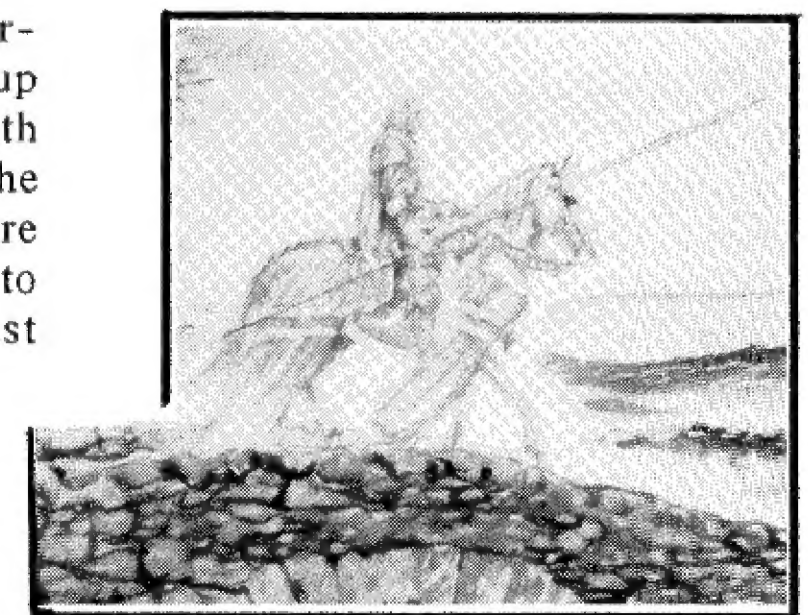
## 10. "The Golden Cross from Hornhelm's Crown..."

This is another puzzle that Stephen put his own interpretation to and improved greatly. Originally, the idea was to have an illustration of the view as you arrive on Windswept Moor, with a Treasure Map in your hand. Stephen instead drew a mysterious picture of Hornhelm's Spirit. But in fact the effect is perfect. Most of the puzzle can be worked out from the map, but the illustration is essential for getting your bearings.

"From the tallest tree on Winswept Moor..." Which is the tallest tree? Perhaps you might think you can see which is the tallest tree on the map, but this is either wrong or a coincidence. The map does not tell you which is the tallest tree, so the only way of solving the puzzle is to try each of the clumps of trees in turn, follow the instructions, and eliminate those starting points that don't work. It may be that with certain starting points, you end up wandering off the map. With others you may complete the directions and end up nowhere near a bush - remember that to find the treasure you must "...dig under a bush."

So from the tallest tree you walk towards the nearest path, follow it to the right, turn upstream at the bridge... *Upstream?* Which way is upstream? Here the illustration on the facing page will help you. The bridge you reach may not be at this particular location, but you will certainly learn which way the rivers flow. Continue upstream until you reach two building directly in line. Then turn eastwards. Which way is eastwards? Again, the illustration will help - remember you have arrived on the Moor at sunrise.

If you follow the instructions for each of the clumps of trees, only one will lead you to a bush. Once you have found it you can count how many trees there are at the correct starting point. So how many trees grow *next to* the tallest tree?

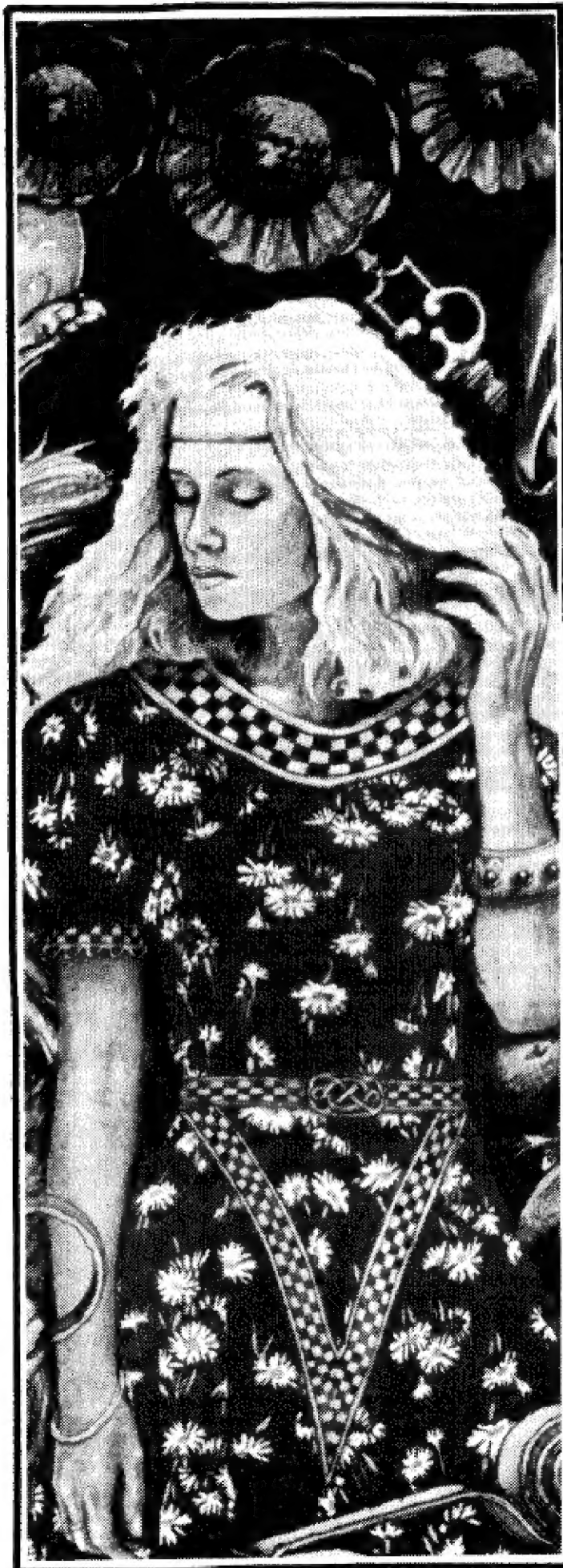




## 11. "Release Cassandra..."

I remember this one well; it was the last one Stephen did. I spent several hours trying to explain how the lock mechanism I had devised for the Tower worked. It was an elaborate affair with a combination lock which affected the tumblers so the key could pass through. I even made up a cardboard model from an old cornflakes packet to demonstrate! But Stephen remained confused. In the end, he came up with an alternative design which was very much simpler but worked perfectly. This is it.

No great mystery about this one. At the foot of the page you can see exactly how the lock works. As the key turns, its blade passes through a simple template that prevents the wrong key from working. The small inset drawing illustrates the arrangement and should give you an idea of what the blade of the key must look like to pass through. All you then have to do is to locate the key (Hint: it is not on that page). Each of the keys in the book has a number on its shaft.



## 12. "Free good Sir Duke..."



From the seven petrified knights, you must work out which one is Sir Duke. The clues which will allow you to identify him are scattered throughout the book and you must track them down.

The first time Sir Duke is mentioned is on the first page of the story: "Finally it was the bearded Sir Duke who suggested that the Crown be

held by Tantalos..." If Sir Duke is bearded, that rules out statues number 17, 13, 12 and 67, leaving numbers 14, 78 and 23 as contenders. Your final choice can be narrowed down by a trail of clues which begins during conversation with Chauncey the Dwarf, continues in Fickling and ends up... No - you should be able to follow it through now.



### 13. The Runesearch

My original plan was to end the book with a message from Tantalón which simply said something like: "Have you fared well on my Tasks? If so add up all the numbers of your solutions. If this sum totals 235, you have completed The Tasks of Tantalón." This was okay at the time, but I was a little concerned that, if we used this ending, the book would finish with a whimper rather than a bang. It was David Fickling who happened to mention a technical possibility which I seized on as being the perfect ending.

Some of you may have discovered this by accident; I know of at least two people who did. But anyway, the original idea was worked into *The Runesearch*.

Most readers reached Tantalón's scroll and floundered about hopelessly trying to fathom out what should be done. Let's go through Tantalón's message:

*"...The answers to the tasks you've done, Have all been numbers; if they're summed, The starting point you then will find. And through a Runesearch you must wind."*

As explained above, the first thing to do is add together

your solutions to all 12 Tasks. Then you must find the Runestone with that number.

*"So search your Rune with open eyes. And open mind if you be wise."*

Find the Runestone that corresponds to your total. If you cannot find one, your total is wrong. Now somehow this Runestone is the starting point for a 'Runesearch', whatever that may be. It looks like an ordinary Rune. What are you supposed to do with it? Skip the next couple of lines which tell you that a wrong total means no Runestone, until you reach:

*"A hunter with no bow may help; This Task too trying for a Whelp. Mark not his word as it appears. Instead seek what will fade with years."*

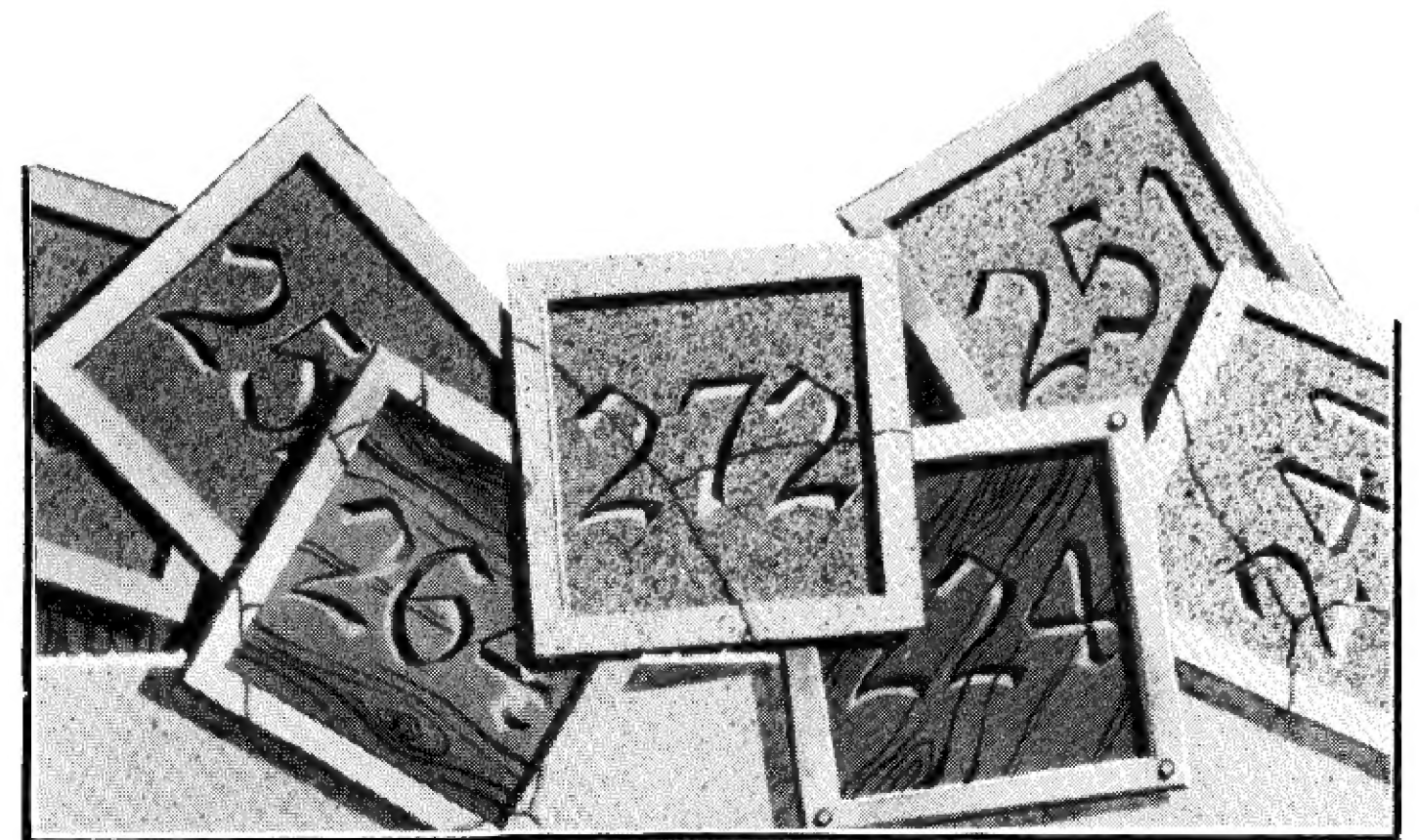
Right. A hunter with no bow? Is this a sword-carrying knight? An animal of some kind? No. You will find the bowless hunter at Fickling. Which task is too trying for a whelp and who is the whelp? A whelp is a youngster; a stripling; a nipper; a whippersnapper. And what task was the whippersnapper faced with? *Supervision*. '...supervision of the vermin-

pit.' But we must 'Mark not his word as it appears. Instead seek what will fade with years.' What fades with years? Amongst other things, sight - or *vision*. The Fickling fisherman's clue is *Super Vision*. Which is what you'll need to embark on the Runesearch. And the same clue was given already in Tantalón's message: *'So search your rune with open eyes, And open mind, if you be wise.'*

If this makes no sense, you'll just have to go straight to the back page and go through the answers. But if something has clicked, you will already be progressing along

your Runesearch. And if you've solved all the Tasks correctly, you will have no trouble reaching the end of the Runesearch when you must find the Sword of Justice and the Crown of Courage. These are identified to you in the same way as the Runes.

I leave it to you to complete the quest and locate these objects for, now you know the secret of the book, this should be no problem. No problem, that is, except for hardback readers. I couldn't resist a final twist! The Crown of Courage is slightly more difficult to find in the hardback edition.





## SOLUTIONS

1. Move the lever to position five to free Sir Dunstable.
2. The food chain ends with the small silverfish, which is shown on the Cormorant's flag eating a fly. The cost is thus six Copper Pieces.
3. There are thirteen Hag-Witches in all.
4. The three open valves are three, four and seven. The total is thus fourteen.
5. The Brimstone Dragon guards one hundred and two Gold Pieces.
6. A total of twelve hops will allow the Princes to hop free.
7. The correct entrance is number five.
8. The Ting Ring is on Morhus' test tube rack. It has no stones.
9. This is a lateral thinking problem. Think laterally of a chess board. King-Queen-Bishop-Knight-Castle. The answer is Gambit Castle. The co-ordinates are five (E-W) plus one (N-S) equals six.
10. The correct starting point is the group of five trees towards the bottom of the map, just left of centre. Upstream is walking up the page and the east is the bottom of the page. The answer is four.
11. The key to release Cassandra is number fifteen, which you will find in Sir Dunstable's dungeon.
12. Sir Duke has an identical twin who has been sent to Weirtown and can be seen in the picture. The answer is fourteen.
13. The correct total is 196. Rune 196 is on the Ham Princes page (bottom left). Along the left-hand side of the runes-tone you will find a message written in tiny writing which you will need a magnifying glass to read and you can set off on your Runesearch. The Sword of Justice is held by Tantalos (without his hat) on the riverbank with the Spirit of Hornhelm. The Crown of Courage is on the back cover. If you have the hardback book, the final message is only printed on the book itself; not on the cover jacket.

